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MANAGEMENT OF CONTRACT DATA

Background of the Invention

1. Technical Field

The present invention relates to a system and method for managing contract data that is transferred between discrete contract management systems.

2. Related Art

An online financial software package known as Systems Applications and Products (SAP) includes software that can be used for managing contract data, but is inefficient for managing contract data that is transferred between discrete SAP systems. Accordingly, there is a need for an efficient system and method for managing contract data that is transferred between discrete SAP systems.

Summary of the Invention

The present invention provides a method for managing contract data, comprising: receiving a contract dataset by a decentralized execution system (DES) from a procurement contract management system (PCMS); and passing the contract dataset through a software filter that determines whether to store the contract dataset or a first portion thereof in a relational database of the DES, said relational database including contract datasets, vendor datasets, and purchase item datasets.

The present invention provides a method for updating an execution document relating to a contract, said method comprising:

having an execution document at a decentralized execution system (DES) of a procurement contract management system (PCMS), said execution document being derived from a contract dataset in the DES, said execution document having an existing attribute value for a purchase item in the contract dataset;

receiving notice at the DES from the PCMS of a new attribute value that is to replace the existing attribute value; and

replacing the existing attribute value with the new attribute value in the execution document.

The present invention provides a method of contract archiving, comprising:

sending a list of I identifiers by a procurement contract management system (PCMS) to at least one decentralized execution system (DES), said I at least 1, each identifier of the I identifiers identifying a contract dataset in the PCMS earmarked by the PCMS for archiving;

receiving by the PCMS a return list of M of the I identifiers from each DES of the at least one DES in response to said sending, said M in a range of $0 \leq M \leq I$, said return list being DES-specific, each said contract dataset identified in the return list of each DES having been approved by said each DES for archiving; and

archiving by the PCMS each contract dataset identified in the list of I identifiers and appearing in an intersection list of the return lists, if the intersection list is not empty.

The present invention provides a system for managing contract data, comprising software

at a decentralized execution system (DES), said software adapted to:

receive a contract dataset by the DES from a procurement contract management system (PCMS); and

pass the contract dataset through a software filter that is adapted to determine whether to
5 store the contract dataset or a first portion thereof in a relational database of the DES, said relational database adapted to include contract datasets, vendor datasets, and purchase item datasets.

The present invention provides a system for updating an execution document relating to a contract, comprising a decentralized execution system (DES) of a procurement contract
10 management system (PCMS), said DES having software adapted:

to have an execution document at the DES, said execution document being derived from a contract dataset in the DES, said execution document having an existing attribute value for a purchase item in the contract dataset;

to receive notice at the DES from the PCMS of a new attribute value that is to replace the
15 existing attribute value; and

to replace the existing attribute value with the new attribute value in the execution document.

The present invention provides a system for contract archiving, comprising a procurement contract management system (PCMS) having software adapted:

20 to send a list of I identifiers to at least one decentralized execution system (DES), said I at least 1, each identifier of the I identifiers identifying a contract dataset in the PCMS earmarked

by the PCMS for archiving;

to receive a return list of M of the I identifiers from each DES of the at least one DES in response to having sent the list of I identifiers to each said DES, said M in a range of $0 \leq M \leq I$, said return list being DES-specific, each said contract dataset identified in the return list of each

DES having been approved by said each DES for archiving; and

to archive each contract dataset identified in the list of I identifiers and appearing in an intersection list of the return lists, if the intersection list is not empty.

The present invention provides an efficient system and method for managing contract data that is transferred between discrete SAP systems. The present invention also provides an automated and efficient system and method for contract archiving.

Brief Description of the Drawings

FIG. 1 is a block diagram of a contract management architecture that includes a decentralized execution system (DES) coupled to a procurement contract management system (PCMS), in accordance with embodiments of the present invention.

FIG. 2 depicts relationships between a contract, a contract dataset, a contract deltadataset, and an execution document, in accordance with embodiments of the present invention.

FIG. 3 depicts a layout of a relational database of the DES of FIG. 1, in accordance with embodiments of the present invention.

FIG. 4 depicts a layout of the contract dataset of FIG. 2, in accordance with embodiments of the present invention.

FIG. 5 depicts entries that may appear in a purchase order, in accordance with embodiments of the present invention.

FIG. 6 depicts entries that may appear in a scheduling agreement, in accordance with embodiments of the present invention.

FIG. 7 is a flow chart for processing a new or updated contract dataset, in accordance with embodiments of the present invention.

FIG. 8 is a flow chart for updating an execution document, in accordance with embodiments of the present invention.

FIG. 9 depicts archiving a contract, in accordance with embodiments of the present invention.

FIG. 10 is a block diagram of a computer configuration for the contract management architecture of FIG. 1, in accordance with embodiments of the present invention.

Detailed Description of the Invention

FIG. 1 is a block diagram of a contract management architecture **10** that includes a decentralized execution system (DES) **14** coupled to a procurement contract management system (PCMS) **12**, in accordance with embodiments of the present invention. The PCMS **12** and the DES **14** may each independently be a Systems Applications and Products (SAP) system or a non-SAP system. Definitionally, a SAP system functions by executing SAP software.

The contract management architecture **10** manages contracts for the sale of goods (e.g., materials, devices, machines, vehicles, etc.) and services (e.g., service to repair, install, fabricate,

advertise, etc.) for use by buyers of the goods and services. Such goods and services are called “purchase items.” A contracts database **16** stores the contracts in their exact wording, while the PCMS **12** receives from the contracts database **16** selected information (e.g., vendor, purchase item(s), price, payment terms, termination date, etc.) relating to some or all of the contracts stored in the contracts database **16**. The contract data stored in the PCMS **12** for each contract is called a “contract dataset.” A “dataset” is defined herein as a collection of data, such as a database, one or more files of data, one or more tables of data, etc. A data path **13** between the contracts database **16** and the PCMS **12** may be electronic or manual.

The PCMS **12** serves as a master repository for contract data and feeds such contract data, as contracts are created and updated, to one or more DES such as the DES **14**. Each DES serves to execute the functionality of selected contracts, such as to create and update execution documents (e.g., purchase orders, scheduling agreements, etc.) relating to the selected contracts. Thus the DES **14** requires data for those contracts that are active (i.e., being used or intended to be used) in the DES **14**. The PCMS **12** feeds contract datasets to the DES **14** for such contracts that are active in the DES **14**, but also for contracts that are not active in the DES **14**. Since the DES **14** needs contract datasets only for its active contracts, the DES **14** selectively filters contract datasets received from the PCMS **12** and stores in its main relational database only contract data for its active contracts, as will be described *infra*. A data path **15** between the purchase the PCMS **12** and the DES **14** is electronic and computer automated. The data path **15** might represent a data communications network between PCMS **12** at a the central site and the DES **14** at a remote site. Definitionally, a data communications network comprises

communication lines over which data is transmitted from one node to another, and each said node may include, *inter alia*, a computer, a terminal, a communication control unit, etc.

Each contract states a vendor (i.e., seller) and purchase items to be purchased by a named purchaser. Accordingly, the contract management architecture **10** includes a vendor database **18** and a purchase item database **20**. The vendor database **18** is a master repository of vendors and stores, in vendor datasets, information about each vendor such as identification (e.g., a vendor number), name of vendor, address, telephone number, etc. The PCMS **12** receives from the vendor database **18** vendor information (i.e., vendor datasets) that pertain to the contract datasets stored within the PCMS **12**. A data path **21** between the vendor database **18** and the PCMS **12** may be electronic or manual. The DES **14** receives from the vendor database **18** vendor information (i.e., vendor datasets) that relate to contracts that are active or may become active in the DES **14**. A data path **22** between the vendor database **18** and the DES **14** may be electronic or manual.

The purchase item database **20** is a master repository of purchase items and stores, in purchase item datasets, information about each purchase item such as identification (e.g., a purchase item number) and characteristics (e.g., size, weight, color), descriptive text, etc. The PCMS **12** receives from the purchase item database **20** purchase item information (i.e., purchase item datasets) that pertain to the contract datasets stored within the PCMS **12**. A data path **23** between the purchase item database **20** and the PCMS **12** may be electronic or manual. The DES **14** receives from the purchase item database **20** purchase item information (i.e., purchase item datasets) that relate to contracts that are active or may become active in the DES **14**. A data path

24 between the purchase item database 20 and the DES 14 may be electronic or manual.

FIG. 2 depicts relationships between a contract 26, a contract dataset 28, a contract deltadataset 30, and an execution document 32, in accordance with embodiments of the present invention. A contract 26 for the sale of purchase items (i.e., goods or services), as used herein, is a legally binding agreement, in writing, between a purchaser and a vendor of the purchase items. The contract 26 consists of all of the words of the agreement. A contract dataset 28 is a collection of data comprising terms (e.g., vendor, purchaser, purchase item(s), price, payment terms, termination date, etc.) of the contract. The contract deltadataset 30 is a collection of data that updates an already existing contract dataset. The contract deltadataset 30 may include such information as added purchase items to an existing contract, a change in price or a new price of a purchase item in an existing contract, changes in delivery terms such as free on board (F.O.B.), free alongside (F.A.S.), change in payment terms, etc. The present invention processes added purchase items in the contract deltadataset 30 as discussed *infra* in accordance with FIG. 7. The present invention processes other changes such as new or changed prices of the contract deltadataset 30 as discussed *infra* in accordance with FIG. 8. The execution document 32 includes, *inter alia*, a purchase order, a scheduling agreement, etc. As seen in FIG. 2, the contract dataset 28 is derived from the contract 26 and is said to be keyed to the contract 26. The contract deltadataset 30 feeds the contract dataset 28 and is said to be keyed to the contract dataset 28. The execution document 32 is derived from the contract dataset 28.

FIG. 3 depicts a layout of a relational database 40 of the DES 14 of FIG. 1, in accordance with embodiments of the present invention. In FIG. 3, the relational database 40 comprises

contract datasets **42**, vendor datasets **44**, purchase item datasets **46**, and execution documents, **48**.

If the DES **14** is a SAP system, then the relational database **40** is a SAP relational database, and if the DES **14** is a non-SAP system, then the relational database **40** is a non-SAP relational database. Definitionally, a SAP relational database is a relational database that functions under control of SAP software.

FIG. 4 depicts a layout of a contract dataset **50**, such as the contract dataset **28** of FIG. 2, in accordance with embodiments of the present invention. In FIG. 4, the contract dataset **50** comprises a contract identification **52** (e.g., contract identification number), a vendor identification **54** (e.g., vendor identification number), purchase item(s) **56**, and other contract terms or data **58**.

Purchase orders and scheduling agreements are examples of execution documents. FIG. 5 depicts entries that may appear in a purchase order **60**, in accordance with embodiments of the present invention. The price in a purchase order applies through the term (i.e., time period) of the contract. If the price is changed in accordance with a new or renewed contract (or for any other reason) , the purchase order will be modified to incorporate the price change as described *infra* in conjunction with FIG. 8. FIG. 6 depicts entries that may appear in a scheduling agreement **62**, in accordance with embodiments of the present invention. A scheduling agreement includes a schedule for delivering the purchase items bargained for buy the purchaser. If the price is determined by a price in effect at the time of delivery, then the scheduling agreement will be updated to reflect any change in price that occurs prior to delivery as described *infra* in conjunction with FIG. 8.

FIG. 7 is a flow chart for DES software 65 (called "DES FILTER" software) that processes a "contract datagroup" received by the DES 14 from the PCMS 12 of FIG. 1, as denoted in block 64 and in accordance with embodiments of the present invention. A "contract datagroup" is defined herein as being either a contract dataset or a contract deltadataset having new or changed purchase items. The DES software 65 also processes a new purchase item that is added to a relational database (RDBS) of the DES 14 as denoted in block 78. Although the DES FILTER software of the present invention does not currently exist in SAP, the scope of the present invention includes the DES FILTER software as either SAP software or non-SAP software. In relation to use of the DES FILTER software, the scope of the present invention includes the PCMS 12 and the DES 14 as each independently being a SAP system or a non-SAP system.

The DES software 65 is applicable to, *inter alia*, the following situation. If the PCMS 12 and the DES 14 of FIG. 1 are each a SAP system, then the PCMS 12 pushes all contract datagroups in its database into each such DES system to which the PCMS 12 is coupled. However, the DES 14 does not process or execute all contract datasets that exist in the PCMS 12, but only those contract datasets that are active in the DES 14. Thus, it would be inefficient and wasteful for the DES 14 to accept and store in its relational database 40 (see FIG. 3) all contract datagroups (or contents thereof) that the DES 14 receives from the PCMS 12. Accordingly, the DES software 65 selectively processes (i.e., filters) the datagroups received from the PCMS 12.

As stated *supra*, the DES 14 receives a contract datagroup D_G from the PCMS 12 as indicated in block 64. The contract datagroup D_G is either a contract dataset or a contract

deltadataset with one or more new purchase items. The contract datagroup D_G identifies N purchase items ($N \geq 1$) that are purchasable from a vendor V keyed to the contract datagroup D_G (i.e., identified in the contract as a vendor). If the contract datagroup D_G is the contract dataset, then the contract datagroup D_G identifies the vendor V . If the contract datagroup D_G is the contract deltadataset, then the contract datagroup D_G does not have to identify the vendor V , since the vendor V has been previously identified to the already-existing contract dataset. The DES 14 comprises the relational database 40 of FIG. 3 which includes the contract datasets 42, the vendor datasets 44 having vendors, and purchase item datasets 46 having purchase item(s). The relational database 40 may also include execution documents 48.

In FIG. 7, decision block 66 determines which, if any, of the N purchase items identified in the contract datagroup D_G matches a purchase item in the purchase item datasets 46 stored in the DES relational database (DES RDBS) 40 (see FIG. 3). The decision block 66 also determines a total number K of such purchase items in D_G that do not so match a purchase item in the purchase item datasets 46 of the DES RDBS 40 of FIG. 3. K is in a range of $0 \leq K \leq N$.

If $K < N$ then a remaining $N-K$ purchase items in D_G are in the DES RDBS 40 and for the remaining $N-K$ purchase items, the subsequent processing depends on whether the contract datagroup D_G is the contract dataset or the contract deltadataset. If the contract datagroup D_G is the contract dataset, then the decision block 68 determines whether the vendor V matches a vendor in the vendor datasets 44 (see FIG. 4). If the vendor V so matches a vendor in the vendor datasets 44, then block 69 adds a subset of D_G to the contract datasets 42 of the relational database 40. This subset of D_G is the remaining $N-K$ purchase items in D_G formed by excluding

the K purchase items from D_G . For $K > 0$, the K purchase items are not stored in the relational database 40, since the K purchase items do not exist in the purchase item datasets 46 (see FIG. 3), as discussed *supra*. If $K > 0$ then the K purchase items not in the purchase item datasets 46 may be stored in a special database of the DES 14, as denoted in block 67. The special database stores contract datasets having one or more purchase items not currently present in the purchase item datasets 46. The contract datasets stored in the special database may be subsequently used to update the contract datasets 42 of the relational database 40 when a new matching purchase item is added in the future to the purchase item datasets 46, as will be explained *infra* in conjunction with block 78. Although the special database of the present invention does not currently exist in SAP, the scope of the present invention includes the special database as either a SAP database or a non-SAP database.

Returning to the decision block 66 for the case of $K < N$, the alternative situation of the contract datagroup D_G being the contract deltadataset will now be considered. The contract deltadataset includes N-K purchase items that exist in the purchase items database 46 in relation to a contract dataset D_1 , wherein D_1 currently exists the contract datasets 42 (see FIG. 3). Thus, the contract deltadataset is said to be keyed to D_1 . Since D_1 is a pre-existing contract dataset with an already-identified vendor, the decision block 68 is bypassed and the block 69 is executed next, which adds to D_1 the remaining N-K purchase items of the contract datagroup D_G . If $K > 0$, then the K purchase items not in the purchase item datasets 46 may be stored in the special database of the DES 14, as denoted in the block 67 as follows. If D_G is keyed to a contract dataset D' in the special database (i.e., if D_G has a contact identification that matches the contract identification

of the contract dataset D' in the special database), then the K purchase items of D_G are added to D'. If D_G is not keyed to any contract dataset in the special database, then a new contract dataset D_{C1} is formed from D_G such that D_{C1} includes the K purchase items of D_G and excludes the remaining N-K purchase items of D_G, and D_{C1} is then added to the special database.

5 Returning to the decision block 66, the case of K = N is now considered. If K=N, then no purchase item in the contract datagroup D_G matches a purchase item in the purchase item datasets 46 stored in the DES RDBS 40 (see FIG. 3). Thus, no portion of the contract datagroup D_G is added to the DES RDBS 40, since none of the purchase item in D_G exist in the DES 14. Instead, the K purchase items not in the purchase item datasets 46 may be stored in the special database of the DES 14, as denoted in the block 67 as follows. If D_G is keyed to a contract dataset D'' in the special database, then the N purchase items of D_G are added to D''. If D_G is not keyed to any contract dataset in the special database, then a new contract dataset D_{C2} is formed from D_G such that D_{C2} includes the N purchase items of D_G, and D_{C2} is then added to the special database.

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20 Returning to block 68 (which is pertinent only if the contract datagroup D_G is the contract dataset and is not pertinent if the contract datagroup D_G is the contract deltadataset), if the vendor V does not match a vendor in the vendor datasets 44 of the DES RDBS 40 (see FIG. 3) then a vendor dataset D_V may be added to the vendor datasets 44 of the DES RDBS 40 (see FIG. 3) when a contract based on one or more of the remaining N-K purchase items of D_G is required at the DES 14 (i.e., required due to a need to purchase the one or more of the remaining N-K purchase items of D_G at the DES 14), wherein the vendor dataset D_V is keyed to the vendor V (i.e., includes the vendor V). A manner of adding D_V to the vendor datasets 44 is shown in

blocks **70-73** of FIG. 7. In block **70**, a DES buyer is sent a message relating to adding D_v to the vendor datasets **44** of the RDBS **40**. The DES buyer is keyed to (i.e., authorized to purchase) at least one purchase item of the remaining N-K purchase items. As shown in decision block **71**, the DES buyer queries whether the contract based on one or more of the remaining N-K purchase items of D_G is required at the DES **14**. If the answer to the query is YES, then the DES buyer may cause D_v to be added to the vendor V datasets **44** by extracting the vendor V from the vendor database **18** (see FIG. 1) as indicated in block **72**, followed by adding the vendor V to the vendor datasets **44** as indicated in block **73**. If the answer to the query is NO, then the DES buyer waits and requests the vendor V at a time in the future when a contract based on one or more of the remaining N-K purchase items of D_G becomes required at the DES **14** (see block **74**), followed by execution of blocks **72** and **73** described *supra*. Although blocks **70-73** describe a process for adding D_v to the vendor datasets **44**, any method that would be obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art may be used for adding D_v to the vendor datasets **44**. After the vendor V is added to the vendor datasets **44** as indicated in block **73**, the subset of D_G comprising the remaining N-K purchase items in D_G is added to the contract datasets **42** in the RDBS **40** as indicated in block **69**.

Block **78** of FIG. 7 illustrates how the DES software **65** processes a new purchase item that has been added to the purchase item datasets **46** of the DES RDBS **40** (see FIG. 3). The new purchase item may be derived from the purchase item database **20** of FIG. 1. As discussed *supra* in conjunction with block **67** of FIG. 7, the special database of the DES **14** (see FIG. 1) may be used to store contract datasets for purchase items received (see block **64**) from the PCMS **12** (see

FIG. 1) wherein such purchase items are not in the purchase item datasets 46. Thus, if a new purchase item is subsequently added to the purchase item datasets 46, as indicated in block 78, then block 76 asks whether the new purchase item exists in a contract dataset D_{CS} of the special database. If the new purchase item does not exist in a contract dataset D_{CS} of the special database, then processing for the new purchase item ceases as indicated in block 77.

However, if in response to the query in block 76, D_{CS} exists such that the new purchase item is identified in D_{CS} , and if D_{CS} identifies a total of J purchase items ($J \geq 1$), then block 68 determines whether a vendor identified in D_{CS} matches a vendor in the vendor datasets 44 (see FIG. 3). If the vendor identified in D_{CS} so matches a vendor in the vendor datasets 44 then the contract datasets 42 (see FIG. 3) are updated with purchase item data in D_{CS} as follows. If a contract identifier of D_{CS} matches a contract identifier of a contract dataset D_{CR} in the relational database 40 (see FIG. 3) then the new purchase item is added to the contract dataset D_{CR} .

However, if the contract identifier of D_{CS} does not matches a contract identifier of any contract dataset in the relational database 40 then a subset of D_{CS} is added to the relational database, wherein the subset of D_{CS} includes the new purchase item. Additionally, if $J = 1$ then D_{CS} is deleted from the special database, but if $J > 1$ then the new purchase item is deleted from D_{CS} .

Returning to the path of blocks 78, 76, and 68, if the vendor identified in D_{CS} does not match any vendor in the vendor datasets 44 (see FIG. 3), then the new purchase item is further processed in the same manner as was described *supra* for a purchase item in a contract dataset introduced into the DES 14 via the path of blocks 64 and 68, and is thus further processed in accordance with blocks 70-73, and 69 as described *supra*.

5 In summary, a contract dataset sent to the DES 14 by the PCMS 12 (see FIG. 1) as shown
in block 64 of FIG. 7 passes through a software filter provided by the "DES FILTER" software.
The filter functionality provided in blocks 66 and 68. Additional filter functionality is provided
in block 76 for new purchase items. The software filter functionality determines whether to store
the contract dataset being filtered (or a first portion thereof) in the relational database 40 (see
FIG. 3) of the DES 14. The software filter functionality further determines whether to store the
contract dataset being filtered (or a portion thereof) in the special database of the DES 14. In an
embodiment of the software filter functionality, the DES 14 is a first SAP contract management
system, the PCMS 12 is a second SAP contract management system, the relational database 40 is
a SAP database, the software filter is a non-SAP software filter, and the special database is a non-
SAP database.

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FIG. 8 is a flow chart 100 of DES software (called "DES UPDATE" software) for
updating an execution document 32 of FIG. 2, in accordance with embodiments of the present
invention. The execution document 32 includes, *inter alia*, a purchase order (see FIG. 5), a
scheduling agreement (see FIG. 6), etc. As an example of updating a purchase order, the existing
price is changed to a new price in accordance with a new or renewed contract (or for any other
reason), the purchase order will be modified to incorporate the price change. The new price
typically replaces the existing price in the purchase order not before the new price becomes
effective for the contract. As an example of updating a scheduling agreement in which the price
paid by the purchaser is the price in effect at the time of delivery of purchase item(s), then the
scheduling agreement will be updated to reflect any change in price that occurs prior to delivery.

Generally, an "attribute value" is updated in an execution agreement in accordance with the present invention. An attribute value in an execution document is a contract parameter value in the execution document. Examples of attribute values include, *inter alia*, a price of a purchase item, delivery terms (e.g., F.O.B., F.A.S.), financing terms, etc.

5 As seen in FIGS. 2-3, the execution document **32** is derived from the contract dataset **28** of the contract datasets **42** of the DES RDBS **40**. The execution document **32** may have been generated in a sequence described by blocks **101-103** of FIG. 8. In block **101**, the contract dataset **28** is shown to originate in the PCMS **12** (see FIG. 1). Block **102** shows the contract dataset **28** transferred from the PCMS **12** to the DES **14** (see FIG. 1) as discussed *supra* in conjunction with the block **64** of FIG. 7. Alternatively, the contract dataset **28** may have been placed or generated in the DES **14** in any other manner such as from a process sequence of adding a new purchase item to the RDBS **40** of the DES **14** as described *supra* in conjunction with the process sequence starting with block **78** of FIG. 7. Block **103** in FIG. 8 depicts generation of the execution agreement in the DES **14** such that the execution agreement has an existing attribute value. Block **104** of FIG. 8 indicates that the DES **14** receives notice from the PCMS **12** that a new attribute value is now effective; i.e., that the contract dataset **28** has been modified to include the new attribute value for the associated purchase item. Accordingly, block **105** replaces the existing attribute value in the execution document with the new attribute value.

Although the DES UPDATE software of the present invention does not currently exist in SAP, the scope of the present invention includes the DES UPDATE software as either SAP software or non-SAP software. In relation to use of the DES UPDATE software, the scope of the

present invention includes the PCMS 12 and the DES 14 as each independently being a SAP system or a non-SAP system.

FIG. 9 depicts archiving a contract, in accordance with embodiments of the present invention. FIG. 9 shows a contract management architecture 120 comprising a PCMS 125 and X DES's, namely $DES_1, DES_2, \dots, DES_X$ wherein $X \geq 1$. The contract management relationships between the PCMS 12 and DES 14 of FIG. 1, as described *supra*, apply to the PCMS 125 and $DES_1, DES_2, \dots, DES_X$ of FIG. 9. The PCMS 125 desires to archive (i.e., delete or store elsewhere) I contract datasets ($I \geq 1$). Before actually implementing the archiving, the PCMS 125 requires unanimous approval of the archiving from all of $DES_1, DES_2, \dots, DES_X$ for each contract dataset to be archived. Accordingly, the PCMS 125 sends a list L of I identifiers to each of $DES_1, DES_2, \dots, DES_X$. Each of the I identifiers identifies a contract dataset in the PCMS 125 earmarked by the PCMS 125 for archiving. After receiving the list L, each of $DES_1, DES_2, \dots, DES_X$ responds to the PCMS 125 by sending a return list R_1, R_2, \dots, R_X , respectively. The return lists are DES-specific; i.e., R_1, R_2, \dots, R_X are independent of one another and are specific to $DES_1, DES_2, \dots, DES_X$, respectively. The return list sent by DES_i includes M_i of the I identifiers ($0 \leq M_i \leq I$) for $i = 1, 2, \dots, I$. Each contract dataset identified in the return list of DES_i is approved by DES_i for archiving, for $i = 1, 2, \dots, I$.

After receiving all of the return lists, the PCMS 125 generates an intersection list from R_1, R_2, \dots, R_X . The intersection list is a logical intersection of R_1, R_2, \dots, R_X ; i.e., the intersection list contains those contract datasets that are common to each of R_1, R_2, \dots, R_X . Accordingly, each contract dataset on the intersection list appears on each return list R_1, R_2, \dots, R_X . The PCMS 125

archives each contract dataset appearing on the intersection list. Note that the intersection list may be empty (i.e., have no contract datasets therein). If the intersection list is empty, then no contract datasets are archived.

The PCMS **125** has software (called "PCMS ARCHIVE" software) for implementing
5 FIG. 9; i.e.,: for preparing and sending the list L to each of DES₁, DES₂, ..., DES_x, for receiving R₁, R₂, ..., R_x and generating the intersection list, and for archiving the contract datasets appearing on the intersection list. Although the PCMS ARCHIVE software of the present invention does not currently exist in SAP, the scope of the present invention includes the PCMS ARCHIVE software as either SAP software or non-SAP software. In relation to use of the
10 PCMS ARCHIVE software, the scope of the present invention includes the PCMS **12** and the DES **14** as each independently being a SAP system or a non-SAP system.

Each of DES₁, DES₂, ..., DES_x has software (called "DES ARCHIVE" software) to receive the list L, prepare its return list, and send its return list to the PCMS **125**. Although the DES ARCHIVE software of the present invention does not currently exist in SAP, the scope of
15 the present invention includes the DES ARCHIVE software as either SAP software or non-SAP software. In relation to use of the DES ARCHIVE software, the scope of the present invention includes the PCMS **12** and the DES **14** as each independently being a SAP system or a non-SAP system.

FIG. 10 is a block diagram of a computer configuration for the contract management
20 architecture of FIG. 1 and the systems, databases, software, etc, of FIGS. 2-9 , in accordance with embodiments of the present invention. FIG. 10 illustrates a computer network **80** comprising a

PCMS **85** and a DES **95**. The PMS **85** and the DES **95** communicate over a data path **88** such as communications network described *supra* in conjunction with the data path **15** of FIG. 1. The DES **95** represents one or more of such DES's which are linked to the PCMS **85**.

The PCMS **85** includes a processor **81**, an input device **82** (representing at least one input device) coupled to the processor **81**, an output device **83** (representing at least one output device) coupled to the processor **81**, and a memory or storage device **84** (representing at least one memory or storage device) coupled to the processor **81**. The input device **82** may be, *inter alia*, a keyboard, a mouse, etc. The output device **83** may be, *inter alia*, a printer, a plotter, a computer screen, a magnetic tape, a removable hard disk, a floppy disk, etc. The memory or storage device **84** may be, *inter alia*, a hard disk, an optical disk, a dynamic random access memory (DRAM), a read-only memory (ROM), etc. The memory or storage device **84** stores the PCMS software **86** and a PCMS database **87**. The PCMS software **86** includes all PCMS software discussed herein (e.g., the "PCMS ARCHIVE" software discussed *supra* in conjunction with FIG. 9). The processor **81** executes the PCMS software **86**. The memory or storage device **84** includes input data **89** for the PCMS software **86**. The output device **83** displays output from the PCMS software **86**. Additionally, the output device **83** may be used to display output, source code, graphics, etc.

The DES **95** includes a processor **91**, an input device **92** (representing at least one input device) coupled to the processor **91**, an output device **93** (representing at least one output device) coupled to the processor **91**, and a memory or storage device **94** (representing at least one memory or storage device) coupled to the processor **91**. The input device **92** may be, *inter alia*, a

keyboard, a mouse, etc. The output device 93 may be, *inter alia*, a printer, a plotter, a computer screen, a magnetic tape, a removable hard disk, a floppy disk, etc. The memory or storage device 94 may be, *inter alia*, a hard disk, an optical disk, a dynamic random access memory (DRAM), a read-only memory (ROM), etc. The memory or storage device 94 stores the DES software 96, the DES relational database 97, the DES special database 98, and input data 99 for the DES software 96. The DES software 96 includes all DES software discussed herein (e.g., the DES FILTER software, the DES UPDATE software, and the DES ARCHIVE software discussed *supra* in conjunction with FIGS. 7, 8, and 9, respectively). The processor 91 executes the DES software 96. . The output device 93 displays output from the DES software 96. Additionally, the output device 93 may be used to display output, source code, graphics, etc.

While FIG. 10 shows the computer network 80 as a particular configuration of hardware and software, any configuration of hardware and software, as would be known to a person of ordinary skill in the art, may be utilized for the purposes stated *supra* in conjunction with the particular computer network 80 of FIG. 11. For example, the DES relational database 97 and the DES special database 98 may be in the same or different memory or storage devices. As another example, the individual DES software components (e.g., the DES FILTER software, the DES UPDATE software, and the DES ARCHIVE software) may be in the same or different memory or storage devices.

While embodiments of the present invention have been described herein for purposes of illustration, many modifications and changes will become apparent to those skilled in the art. Accordingly, the appended claims are intended to encompass all such modifications and changes

as fall within the true spirit and scope of this invention.

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